

PS 635

.Z9B4

Bedel, John A

Pax Iecum

TECUM,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

JOHN A. BEDEL.

PSL 55
3924



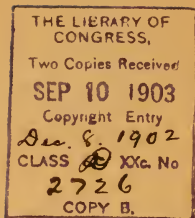
...PAX TECUM...

Dramatis Personae.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 SERVIVS, Governor of Syria. | 14 PATERNUS, } leaders |
| 2 JULIA, his daughter. | 15 PALLADIUS, } of mob. |
| 3 KALISTOS, a Syrian Prince. | |
| 4 LUCIVS, a Roman Centurion | 16 MARCARIUS, } wrestlers |
| 5 NIKON, a R man general. | 17 TITUS, } in mob. |
| 6 NIZIA, Julia's maid. | |
| 7 NIGER, Servivs' factotum. | 18 MARCELLUS, } gamblers |
| 8 QUINTUS, a Roman soldier. | 19 GABINUS, } in mob. |
| 9 QUADRATUS, a Roman | 20 QUIRINUS, } |
| soldier. | 21 CLAUDIA, } dancers |
| 10 VITUS, a Roman soldier. | 22 VERA, } and |
| 11 SIMPLICIVS, a Roman plebian | 23 SOPHIA, } singers |
| 12 LUCVLLVS, page to Servivs. | 24 OLIVA, } in |
| 13 ZENOS, heathen high priest. | 25 AIDNA, } mob. |
| | 26 JUSTA, } |

Soldiers, two priests, civilians (male and female.)





Copyrighted December 1902,
by
JOHN A. BEDEL,
Belleville, Ill.

NEW-DEMOCRAT



PRINT, BELLEVILLE, ILL.

PAX TECUM.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

(Quintus, Quadratus, Vitus and Simplicius on street near circus.)

QUINTUS—Well, sure enough, here comes my old friend, Nikon. I greet you most cordially.

NIKON—May the stars never lose their luster for you and lead you to fame. What good news have you to report?

SIMPLICIUS—Another accident. Pity I was not around when the gods were selecting their material for a new emperor!

VITUS—Hold your tongue, you simpleton!

QUINTUS—Have you not heard that Rome has a new emperor; whose throne and crown came to him quite unexpectedly?

QUADRATUS—As is often the case nowadays, when one emperor succeeds another in rapid, unexpected manner. He who was a soldier yesterday, becomes emperor to-day.

SIMPLICIUS—Perhaps I will be to-morrow.

NIKON—Tell me how this all happened.

QUINTUS—You know our legions stationed along the lower Danube have never felt kindly toward our late emperor, Phillip the Arabian, and recently arose in open rebellion against him. To quell the disturbance he sent Decius the—

SIMPLICIUS—Hurrah, for Decius!

VITUS—Hush up there, you fool. (Kicks at Simplicius.)

QUINTUS—Well, he sent Decius, an intelligent, energetic officer thither—(loud applause from circus)

SIMPLICIUS—Hurrah (dancing about) they must be having a good time in there. Wonder what Christian dog they now are skinning?

QUINTUS—The excited legions gave willing ear to Decius, but forced him to declare himself emperor and to lead them against Phillip. Near Verona the battle took place between the two armies. Decius conquered and entered Rome as emperor. Now a cheer for the new emperor.

ALL—Vivat Decius, Imperator! (Nikon silent.)

(Simplicius continues vivat, etc., until choked by Vitus, who says)

VITUS—Will you close your trap, or I'll—

NIKON—You all seem to think highly of Decius. Do you know him so well as not to doubt that perhaps ere long you with others may not do as the legions of Phillip along the Danube did?

SIMPLICIUS—Hah! then we'll have some more celebrating, more—

VITUS—By the gods, I'll exterminate you if—

QUINTUS—Know him? Ah! my dear Nikon, besides the science of warfare, he possesses most admirable traits of mind and heart—

QUADRATUS—And foes from within and without shall fear him, and our gods shall smile benignantly upon his reign, which is inseparately consecrated to their worship.

VITUS—Especially this rabble called Christians will be rooted out as a dangerous novelty, a menace to the state.

SIMPLICIUS—(spits in hands) Oh! let me at 'em!

NIKON—But tell me, Quintus, does Decius and others, who think as he, ever take time and trouble to know christianity in its teachings and practices? I fail to understand how a measly handful of weak men and women can be a factor worth consideration.

QUINTUS—What! Nikon, you do not know that this scum of humanity plot in obscure, secret places against not only the empire, but against our temples and gods?

QUADRATUS—And do you not know that they butcher children in their meetings, eat the flesh thereof, and with blood-soaked hands vow ruin and devastation to us all!

VITUS—And that they corrupt our warriors by their treasonable teachings, "that if one smite you on one cheek, reach him the other," and "that one must love his enemies"—

SIMPLICIUS—And that one must not enjoy Bacchus and Venus! Hah! if we cannot enjoy these in greatest freedom, we are un-

worthy of our gods and become like unto those rats, despised by the intelligence and manhood of the whole world.

VITUS—Listen, Who would have sought a philosopher in Simplicius? Well done, Simplex!

NIKON—Will Decius follow in the footsteps of his predecessors by wiping out this secretive sect?

QUINTUS—Will he? Decius is a Roman of the old school, on which account alone, a sworn enemy of that rabble. He has promulgated the most stringent and just decrees against them and has ordered the edicts carried out with unsparing severity. The blood of these traitors is flowing in all countries of the Roman dominion.

QUADRATUS—Soon our gods will be propitiated and we be freed from care about these traitors. (Loud hurrahs from circus.)

SIMPLICIUS—I can't stand it any longer; I must away to the circus. (Exit.)

NIKON—My long absence from Rome has caused me to lose trace of events. Who are the "novi homines," that is, the new men whom Decius has called to assist in the management of the affairs of the state?

QUINTUS—With Decius came the day for the Romans of the old school, the grave, proud, sensitive old Romans. Among these is Servius Theron, whom Decius has already honored during the grand festivities consequent upon the emperor's entrance into Rome.

QUADRATUS—But, Quintus, Servius is no Roman!

QUINTUS—By birth he is a Grecian, but his ancestors have lived for centuries as full-fledged citizens in Rome. They had often distinguished themselves in times of peace and war, and belonged to the elite families. The sire of the Therons is this Servius. A son, Marius, to whom Servius was much attached, than whom no nobler youth lived in all Rome, followed in death his mother recently. An only sister, the pretty and divine Julia, was left to mourn his loss with her father.

NIKON—Are there no other members of this interesting family?

Tell me all about them, since Servius has been so signally honored by Decius.

QUINTUS—Besides the numerous slaves, only two others I would mention, Nizia and Niger, because of their interest in the divine Julia. Nizia is as a sister to Julia, whose every want she anticipates and dries the tears of sorrow with a loving embrace. Niger is, as we Latins say, Servius' *factotum*; that means, a man who can do anything and knows all; who can devise ways and means for all; whom one cannot spare; in short, the most indispensable piece of furniture. He had been purchased a slave by the father of Servius, but later on had been liberated after his faithfulness, prudence and intelligence had been proved. Yea, even more, he has been honored with the esteem and confidence of Servius, and is treated as a member of the family, from whom no secret is withheld. He is attached to Servius with unchangeable devotion. One weakness, however, the old, good Niger possesses, a remarkable weakness toward Julia. He knows her from infancy; for how often had he not carried the little girl in his arms? Julia hangs to him in childish love. Niger is to her something like a mother since she has lost her mother. She calls him little papa, and to him she is his little darling.

NIKON—Is Servius still in Rome? (Loud hurrahs from circus.)

QUINTUS—Perhaps Quadratus knows this better than I?

QUADRATUS—Shortly after the imperial festivities, Servius with his daughter left for his country seat near Antium. There he owns a beautiful villa away up on a promontory with a marvelous view out upon the Mediterranean, and with vast, magnificent gardens extending far inland. The villa is called Terpnon, after a Grecian word which means "bliss," "the seat of bliss." The name is very well, very happily chosen.

NIKON—Happy they must be in Terpnon. Yet to me the word has a melancholy sound; so strangely pathetic, that I feel impending disaster to them.

QUADRATUS—How so? We spoke ill of no one?

NIKON—True, except of that so-called hated tribe of Christians.

QUADRATUS—You are not one of them. How can this effect you?

NIKON—Be that as it may. But—let us be gone; here comes the crowd from the circus, and it will be rather unpleasant to meet with it. (All exit as crowd surges in from opposite side.)

THE MOB.

(Boisterous, talking, laughing. Paternus in lead, Palladius in middle of line. Arriving at statue.)

PALLADIUS—Salve, Caesar, gloriosus!

ALL—Salve, Salve, Salve, Caesar!

PATERNUS—And down with the Christian dogs!

ALL—To the beasts, to the lions with them all! (Mingle and talk; Marcellus, Gabinus and Quirinus aside at dice; Simplicius imitates pose of Caesar at off side of statue, is detected by Paternus, who cries out)

PATERNUS—Hail, new-born Caesar! (All point at Simplicius and laugh. Dancing and singing girls in rear; mob parts to sides, leaving avenue and applaud them. Near close of dance Marcarius and Titus get to wrestling.)

PALLADIUS—Look, look, here! (All surround wrestlers.)

QUIRINUS—I'll bet on Marcarius.

GABINUS—And I'll put my drachmas on Titus.

MARCELLUS—And I'll bet you both lose.

PATERNUS—Come, come, people, give 'em room.

QUIRINUS—Down with him, Marcarius!

GABINUS—Hold him level, Titus!

MARCELLUS—Oh, fudge! they can't wrestle.

PALLADIUS—There goes Marcarius.

PATERNUS—Bully for you, Titus! good boy! Come on boys!
(Crowd moves off slowly.)

GABINUS—(To Quirinus) Gimme my money, you lost.

QUIRINUS—Ah! go away, you're talking frog.

SIMPLICIUS—(Holding Gabinus back.) That was a bully time we had in the circus. How those Christians did squirm and pray to their God. Still they are not afraid to die—even that little lad, Prancratus, did not fear the royal panther. Why—I'd get out,

for a living coward can always have more fun than a dead hero. But—let's catch up with them. (Curtain.)

ACT I.—SCENE 2.—Garden in Terpnon.

JULIA—(Pleasantly.) Ah, dear father, you have called me to the most beautiful spot in Terpnon—hallowed by sweet memories of our dear departed ones. Here their favorite spot, upon the most extreme point projecting into the sea—shaded and roofed by stately oaks, did we spend so many evening hours in viewing and enjoying. Well do I remember the last time. The sun was sinking toward evening in the west, the sky was resplendent in purest azure and the dying embers of day scattered their reddish hues upon the whole landscape. Far, far below, the sea murmured deeply as the billows dashed upon the frowning cliff. But, father, you do not speak—do you not enjoy this lovely spot?

SERVIUS—(Lost in deep, gloomy thought, moves slightly.)

JULIA—(Aside) I surmise what is coming and will not deceive myself. (Seats herself near her father and remains silent.)

SERVIUS—(Suddenly) Do you *know* Lucius?

JULIA—Well, why should I not, father. He was no infrequent guest as long as my brother, our good Marius, was yet alive; they were such fast friends.

SERVIUS—(After a pause) Do you *love* Lucius?

JULIA—(Deeply moved, sighs and finally weeps.)

SERVIUS—(Long pause) Yes, you do love Lucius. I know it—know it alas!

JULIA—(Painfully) But, dear father, how can you say alas? Is not Lucius the best young Roman? Name me one who possesses more accomplishments than he? Did you not yourself often remark, when our Marius was yet living, that Rome did not contain another two young men like these two friends?—

SERVIUS—That is true.

JULIA—(Suave, but convincing) Yes, it is true. Lucius is a model of modesty and good manners—and, at the same time, a man of energy and perseverance, as a true Roman should be.

SERVIUS—That, too, is true. But nevertheless—

JULIA—He has as much heart as intelligence. Yes, I love Lucius. You, with your clearsightedness, must surely have observed how this mutual endearment for years took place, since Lucius came so often to our house. How can you then, father, say that I, *alas*, love Lucius?

SERVIUS—Listen, Julia; a little over four weeks ago Lucius came to me and asked me for your hand—

JULIA—(Interrupting) Lucius came to you and solicited—

SERVIUS—Yes, he solicited your hand and I dismissed him—not without any hope at all, however.

JULIA—(Reaching for Servius' hand to kiss it) Oh! I thank you, dear father.

SERVIUS—(Pulls hand away) But see, Julia, since then many things have changed. The new emperor has honored me; has shown me favors, and will do still more. With Decius our party has attained power, to which by right power belongs; the party of the old, true genuine Romans. Lucius is no genuine old Roman. I owe it, however, to my position—

JULIA—Oh, father, I thought you knew Lucius better. He loves progress, that is true. He loves the new if it be good, but only then. In all things else he, like yourself, is attached to the old, good Roman times. Be not angry, father, if I tell you that that is not the reason why Lucius is no longer as formerly—

SERVIUS—But *one* reason it surely is.

JULIA—Tell me, dear father, frankly, why Lucius is no longer—

SERVIUS—I'll frankly tell you, child. Lucius is too common for you.

JULIA—(Tries to enter protest, but Servius continues.)

SERVIUS—Lucius is in the main all right and good, but a genuine old Roman he is not. He has too much heart, is too soft, too—how shall I term it—too sentimental. The genuine old Roman is made of more solid stuff, not so soft and weak-hearted. Besides, Lucius is a knight, a knight without a name, without renown, and, also, without—wealth.

JULIA—(Tries again to speak.)

SERVIUS—(Motioning silence with hand) Let me finish. I have an-

other important matter to tell you. The emperor has appointed me Governor of Syria. This is an extraordinary distinction, which imposes upon me great duties and obligations. In two, at the most, in three weeks we shall leave Rome and move to Antioch, the capital of Syria. Now, since death has robbed me of all others, judge for yourself, child. In you, all hopes of my race, of my family are centered. I cannot permit that a *poor* young man becomes by son-in-law.

JULIA—(Weeping.)

SERVIUS—(Coldly) Julia, you should not weep. It is an old Roman custom that the father finds the daughter a husband of his own choice, and not that the daughter choose for herself. You will, Julia, adapt yourself to this good, old custom.

JULIA—Certainly, father, I know that this is my duty. I cannot help it, that the parting from—(breaks down with emotion.)

SERVIUS—(Curtly) Lucius knows how the matter stands. You will never see him again and he will not wish to see you again. (Arising.) After our affairs here are settled, we will return to Rome and then journey to Syria. Fear not, I shall find a husband for you. (Exit.)

JULIA—(Alone) Ah! poor me! My heart speaks to me of duty and love. Duty demands a sacrifice of myself, which is painful at all times; love tells me that we were from infancy destined for one another. Cruel fate, that instilled into our young hearts not the crackling flames of passion, but a quiet, pure, innocent attachment—real love. Alas! poor departed mother, look down from the Terpnon of the gods upon your lonely child, and give me strength to bear the heavy burden imposed upon my youthful shoulders. (Nizia enters, Julia advances to meet her.)

JULIA—My dear Nizia, you come just in time to speak to my poor, crushed heart. Oh! the pain of giving up my dear Lucius forever, forever.

NIZIA—Be not distressed, my dear mistress. The path of true love never runs smooth, and he will surely return to you.

JULIA—You misunderstand me. Lucius has not deserted me, but the gods have decreed, by the will of a cruel father, (shocked by the

expression) forgive me, Nizia, this breach—I wanted to say by the call of duty I owe my father, that I must never see him again, but that my father shall find me another one more in accord with our new station in life.

NIZIA—I am surprised at the turn of affairs, and may I ask what you mean by “our new station in life” in order to assist you with my advice and abilities?

JULIA—The emperor has shown my father great favor by appointing him Governor of Syria, to whose capital, Antioch, we are to journey within the next two or three weeks.

NIZIA—This, indeed, is happy news. I congratulate you, Julia, in becoming the first lady in Syria. I know you will like your new home.

JULIA—You have been to Antioch; tell me all about it.

NIZIA—Antioch, the capital of Syria, is not as large and noisy as Rome, but is nevertheless, by virtue of its beauty and size, a royal city. Therefore, several emperors have chosen it for their army headquarters of the eastern department. To this may be added the marvelously beautiful, fruitful plains, in which the city unfolds its attractiveness. In short, one can easily live there, who has been spoiled by the enjoyments of Rome. You will gradually accustom yourself to the new condition of affairs and be happy. The pain caused by the separation from Lucius will soon cease, for you shall command over the hearts and hopes of the royal youths of Syria.

JULIA—Ah! dear Nizia, little do you know my heart. Let us away to the task of preparing for our departure. To you, however, I entrust my last farewell to Lucius. Tell him death alone can separate our hearts—distance, never. (Both exit.)

ACT II.—SCENE 1.—Governor’s Palace in Antioch.

NIGER—(Soliloquising) We have now been domiciled in Antioch these many moons, and whilst engaged with matters of state, Julia’s future has caused the governor no little concern. All the

notables have called since our advent, which fact has given him ample opportunity to muster them, and I fear the choice will be no easy task. True, the fewest are of Syrian origin; mostly immigrants from other countries of the Roman empire, notably from Greece. Some, the descendants of the royal families, who ruled Syria before Rome annexed their country. Therefore the many Grecian names and people of noble ancestry we meet here. According to the good old Roman usage, Julia has, however, only in a perfunctory manner met them, simply to pay her respects to them.

SERVIUS—Just the one I want to see. I have arranged for a number of notables to dine with us to-day. Among them is Kalistos, a prince of Syria, upon whom I look with special favor.

LUCULLUS—(Bows low) My lord, a soldier desires admission.

SERVIUS—Show him in. (Exit Lucullus.)

LUCIUS—(Servius and Niger startle.) The gods protect you, my lord.

SERVIUS—(Sternly) What brings you to me, sir?

LUCIUS—The journey from Rome has been a long one; yet at its end I beheld the star of hope beckoning me, which fact did not allow me to feel fatigue and told me that I should find *here* grace in your eyes, noble sir.

SERVIUS—I do not understand you, young man.

LUCIUS—I come, sir, to renew my request for the hand of your daughter, Julia.

SERVIUS—(Arising angrily) What I have told you about this matter in Rome, applies equally well here in Antioch; do you understand?

LUCIUS—I do, sir. Yet what is worth having is worth the effort. I have loved Julia from infancy, when we, with good Marius, gambled upon the turf of Terpnion, and I have reason to believe that my love is reciprocated by Julia.

SERVIUS—And were this a thousand times so, *I* would say no, absolutely no. It is not a surprise to me, but a degree of impudence approaching an insult, that you dare to come into my presence with a request already disposed of long ago. You may go.

LUCIUS—I shall go, sir. The alternative of my visit is alone left me. From here I shall join the army of the emperor now in the field against the Persians, there to meet an honorable death in defense of the empire and thus commend even your respect, although unwilling.

SERVIUS—I shall have no more of this insolence. Be gone, or I shall call the slaves to enforce my command.

LUCIUS—(Stares at Servius awhile, then exits.)

SERVIUS—(To Niger) That's what such insolent chaps deserve. I now am happily freed of him. The idea, die in battle! He is another one of those weak-hearted buttersouls so common nowadays. They take big mouthsful and still despair at every trifle and entertain in vain a desire to die. Bah! we shall see that that melancholy youth will not have courage enough to go to war, much less to seek death.

NIGER—Calm yourself, my lord. Should he live or die, you have nothing to fear except—per chance, he finds extraordinary favor in the eyes of the emperor.

SERVIUS—Come what may, with him I have done. But you will not forget to be present in the anti-chamber when the nobles arrive, and will tell me of your observations. (Exit.)

NIGER—Methinks he shall be hard to please. Lucius is gone, whether to return or not is the question. Life has surprises, that bring evil oftener than good; sorrow oftener than joy. I, too, shall go. (Exit.)

NIZIA—(Rushing in and looking about) Where is Julia? I must find her. Oh! where can she be? Julia! oh, Julia!

JULIA—(Enters quietly.)

NIZIA—Oh, Julia, a messenger from Rome! A Roman has arrived. Guess who he is?

JULIA—(Calmly) Perhaps, Lucius?

NIZIA—Exactly, it is Lucius.

JULIA—How, and whence do you get your information?

NIZIA—I saw him enter the palace a short while ago. Do you wish to see him? to speak to him?

JULIA—(Pausing) No; I must not. I know that my father would

never permit it. What can be the object of his coming here?

NIZIA—Most certainly to ask again for your hand. He evidently hopes to succeed better here than in Rome.

JULIA—Fruitless, vain hope! But, Nizia, I wish to speak to you about another matter. Father has told me there will be a grand reception here this evening. The noblest Syrians are to dine with us. He desires that I shall be presented to each in turn, but I would so much rather remain in seclusion.

NIZIA—You will surely not disappoint your father?

JULIA—He has cautioned me to pay especial attention to one, who will sit on a cushion to my right; tall, dignified and noble in his bearing, with jet black hair and pleasant mien. He is a descendant of the old families of the Syrian kings. I am to greet him as friendly as possible, for he, father says, deserves it. Whom can he mean?

NIZIA—I do not know. Your father's wish has, however, always been command to you and you will also do now as he wishes, not so?

JULIA—I shall try. Now go, Nizia, arrange for my toilet and meanwhile send Niger to me. (Exit Nizia.) (Julia alone.) Fruitless, vain hope! Poor Lucius, that he does not know my father better. There is less prospect for him now than ever, in short, no prospect at all. I know it, alas, only too well. (Sits down, drops head on arms on table and awaits Niger.)

NIGER—(Enters slowly, views Julia for a moment) May the gods crown you, my darling.

JULIA—(Rising, meets Niger, conducts him to sofa and seats herself on stool) Little papa, I have something—that is—I would like to and should know something.

NIGER—Well, Dolly, what is it? If I myself only know what you desire to know.

JULIA—(Interrupting) Lucius is here in Antioch?

NIGER—(Shrugs shoulders) Is it so? (Looks about.) Well, I shall tell you all, but under seal of the strictest secrecy. Yes, Lucius *was* here.

JULIA—(Hurriedly) And is no longer?

NIGER—No, he is no longer in Antioch.

JULIA—What was his mission here?

NIGER—That is evident. He made another effort to obtain your hand from your father.

JULIA—And what hope did my father hold out to him?

NIGER—This second effort of Lucius did not dispose your father more favorably; on the contrary, embittered him entirely. His refusal was accordingly the harshest, most positive imaginable.

JULIA—(Quietly) What did Lucius reply?

NIGER—Ah! what Lucius said knocked the bottom out of the cask altogether. He said his only alternative was to join the army in the field and seek a glorious death in its ranks.

JULIA—(Shuddering) But what import lies in these words?

NIGER—Your father construed them in a peculiar manner. He thought Lucius was one of those loud-mouthed brags, who have not courage enough to go to war and—

JULIA—(Warmly) And I tell you, Lucius will be as good as his word. He is no braggard and no weakling. I am only sorry that father knows Lucius so little, so—not at all.

NIGER—Did he know him ever so well, all would still be in vain, dear child. (Arising.) Keep your own counsel, however. Do not have it appear, especially to your father, that you know anything.

JULIA—Fear not. I shall respect your confidence. (Exit both.)

ACT II.—SCENE 2.—Governor's Garden.

SERVIUS—(Reading roll.) (Guards drag in Simplicius.)

FIRST GUARD—My lord, we have found this chap prowling about the gardens in a suspicious manner—

SECOND GUARD—And upon questioning him, he failed to give us any satisfactory explanation of his presence and conduct.

SERVIUS—Who are you?

SIMPLICIUS—The gods be my witness. I am a true, genuine Roman of the old school.

SERVIUS—Who has remained in obscurity so long as to have faded into insignificance.

SIMPLICIUS—You wrong me, sir; I have always been found in the front rank when—

SERVIUS—When the emperors provided gala days and plenty to fill the stomach. What are you doing here?

SIMPLICIUS—I have come to pay my respects to the divine Servius; him, whom our glorious emperor, Decius, has so highly honored, and to place myself at his service in the management of the affairs of his exalted position.

SERVIUS—Ah! a statesman, indeed! Well, we shall try to avail ourselves of your intelligence by appointing you to the high and exalted position of stable sweep. It shall never be said of Servius that he ever turned down a genuine old Roman.

SIMPLICIUS—(Bows in thanks and, turning to leave, runs into Quintus.)

QUINTUS—The greetings of the emperor!

SIMPLICIUS—(Finally recognizing Quintus) Well, well, I'll be quartered, if it ain't my old friend Quintus! How have you fared since we—

QUINTUS—(Evasively) This is no time and place to—

SIMPLICIUS—You can't shake me off in this way for—

QUINTUS—Hold your tongue, or I shall ask the governor's protection.

SIMPLICIUS—What! I, who am now enrolled among the dignitaries of the governor's household!

SERVIUS—Which fact does not permit you to interrupt the messenger of the emperor.

SIMPLICIUS—(Bowing) Ah! so, yes, yes, but—

SERVIUS—No other but, but silence. (Simplicius bows and puts hand over mouth.)

SERVIUS—(To Quintus.) What news do you bring?

QUINTUS—I have just returned from the campaign against the Persians—

SERVIUS—A glorious victory it seems to have been, and Decius saved from harm. Tell me all about it.

QUINTUS—As you know, the emperor in person led the Roman legions against the hosts of the Persians. The decisive battle

was fought upon the plateau between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The emperor, carried onward by an impetuous war spirit, got himself into great personal danger. With many of his faithful ones, he forced the enemy's lines in order to reach the Persian king himself. With eyes intently bent forward, he did not observe that many of his guard fell upon the bloody trail and that the group was steadily getting smaller. This state of affairs did not escape the eyes of the Persian king, and he endeavored to cut the emperor off from his army. In this perilous crisis, a Roman centurion rapidly formed a squad of daring braves, charged like a ferocious tiger the enemy's hosts and cut his lord free. This also decided the battle. The Romans achieved a glorious victory and Decius remained unscathed.

SIMPLICIUS—(Quickly) That's what he did, and—

SERVIUS—(Angrily) Silence, I say. Guards! remove this simpleton.

SIMPLICIUS—(Bows and is dragged off.)

SERVIUS—But what became of the brave centurion?

QUINTUS—The centurion, to whom the emperor owes his life and victory, fell in the turmoil beneath the strokes of his opponents.

SERVIUS—Was his name ascertained?

QUINTUS—As far as I could ascertain this fearless, noble knight was called Lucius.

SERVIUS—Lucius, the son of Potinus?

QUINTUS—So I understood. You seem to know him?

SERVIUS—I am slightly acquainted with him. This will do for the present. (Waves Quintus to go.)

SERVIUS—(Meditating) At last, I shall no longer have to bear his inopportunities. Dead—and soon will be forgotten. And Julia?—now, that Lucius is out of the way, shall marry one, by whom I shall rise to greater power, greater honors and fame—perhaps, who knows, to the throne of the emperor. Still a noble youth was he, of whom any father might feel proud; yet his fame, his renown and other good qualities of mind and body now lie buried with his ashes.

LUCULLUS—My lord.

SERVIUS—What have you, young man?

LUCULLUS—A courier has just arrived with this message from his majesty, the emperor.

SERVIUS—(Motions page out and reads) "To the Lord Governor of Syria—Greeting: You have been informed of the glorious victory that crowned our arms and the valor shown by our brave centurion, Lucius, which carried him to sacrifice himself for our august person. By my order, the field of action has been searched in vain for his body. Since we cannot reward the living, it is our earnest desire to bestow the highest possible honors to the memory of the departed hero, thus proclaiming to the whole world our thanks. I, therefore, decree that in all large cities of the empire the most brilliant and pompous funeral festivities shall be arranged. Our special desire is, that Antioch shall not remain behind in honoring the distinguished hero, to whom we are greatly indebted. So ordered by us, Decius, Imperator."

(Soliloquy) The irony of fate that decrees that I shall lead the festivities in honor of one, whom only a few short moons ago, I termed a weakling and foolish braggard. Still my heart rejoices, that he no longer shall be able to renew his petition for the hand of Julia. She will feel acute pain and sorrow over his death, but she will also be filled with admiration and pride, that Lucius has proved himself in strife and death agony as she had predicted. Thus death levels all things, balances all accounts. Rings for page.) Tell Julia to come here. (Page exit.)

SERVIUS—I shall leave her in blissful ignorance as to the fate of Lucius.

JULIA—(Enters and seats herself near her father.)

SERVIUS—How did Kalistos suit you yesterday?

JULIA—(Surprised) Who is Kalistos?

SERVIUS—Pshaw! I forgot to mention his name to you. Kalistos is the descendant of the old dynasty—whom you, as I wished, greeted so pleasantly at the reception. You played your part very well—kind, but dignified and somewhat retiring, as the good old Roman custom demands. I was much pleased with you and Kalistos, also. How did he suit you?

JULIA—Very well, as far as I saw, but I really did not see him. I

only know that his language was very intelligent, decisive and, at the same time, modest and suave.

SERVIUS—(With emphasis) I am glad, very glad, for Kalistos shall be your husband.

JULIA—(Deeply moved, silent and drops her head.)

SERVIUS—It is a most honorable alliance. I really know no one better suited to you. Kalistos traces his ancestry from the old dynasty of Syria. He, too, is the heir to its treasures and wealth; to its possessions of lands and people. Besides, he is the best of man, unimpeached in manners. Detraction and calumny have never dared cast a shadow upon his name. Serene and earnest as our own good Scipio, of Roman memory was, he is at the same time as pleasant and popular as that great African. Do you not think so?

JULIA—I told you, father, I paid no attention. Still it seems to me so.

SERVIUS—I have promised Kalistos your hand. You will surely accept such a husband as I have chosen for you?

JULIA—You know, father, that I will as you will and therefore accept Kalistos since you have chosen and destined him for me.

SERVIUS—That is the language of the daughter of a true, old Roman father and is all I can wish for. Happy the father of such a child. I shall go to Kalistos, who is waiting in the palace. Await here my return. (Exit.)

JULIA—(Alone) And Lucius? Poor, dear Lucius! How oft in fancy's dreams do we sit side by side in dear old Terpnon, where the birds sang so sweetly 'mid the murmurs of the deep. Where you so often crowned me your Ceres and whispered sweet words of love. But Kalistos is mine by the will of my father, whom I must obey. Farewell, Lucius, farewell, forever. (Servius returns with Kalistos and page.)

KALISTOS—(Rapidly coming in) Happy am I to see you again, my beloved Julia (on one knee and kisses her hand) and thrice happy to hear you confirm by your own words the promise made me by your father.

JULIA—My father's wish is my wish. As a dutiful daughter I accept you, Kalistos, as my husband.

KALISTOS—(Takes her hand, his other on her shoulder) For you alone my heart shall beat, my energies shall strive, by arm uplifted in protection, my whole life be devoted.

SERVIUS—And may the gods hold you in their keeping forevermore. (Kalistos leads Julia out, followed by Servius. Page remains behind, looks after them then dances about with delight and sings.)

PAGE—(Sings.)

NIKON—(Enters during song, stands behind a tree. After song says) Do all the birds in this garden sing so sweetly as you, and may I ask the cause of your mirth?

LUCULLUS—Certainly, sir. Mistress Julia has just been betrothed to the noble Kalistos.

NIKON—And pray, where is he now?

LUCULLUS—He has gone to the palace. Do you wish to see him?

NIKON—Yes, my lad, I do. (Walks about awaiting Kalistos.)

KALISTOS—Enters humming a song; seeing Nikon he rushes to him; they shake.) Ah! it is you, my dear Nikon!

NIKON—God bless you, Kalistos; you seem to be in a happy mood.

KALISTOS—Why should I not be? Surrounded by all that tends to make earth a veritable elisium, what can my heart desire more? Julia, the best, the loveliest of women, is mine and our hearts beat in unison to the sweetest melodies of pure love. But what honor is mine that the commander visits me this day?

NIKON—You flatter me, Kalistos. Although I am inferior only to the governor himself, I still feel that he and I are mere atoms in the sight of Him who governs all. True, we both work together for the common welfare of the empire, yet confidential relations cannot exist between us. You alone know that for years the God of the despised Christians is my God. Him alone do I adore. In His service I find greater happiness than in all honors and titles any emperor can bestow. His command, "Render unto God, what belongs to God, and to Caesar what belongs to Caesar," makes the ideal and real patriot, willing to risk his all; yea, life itself in defense of his country. A good Christian can never be a bad citizen. To let you, my dear Kalistos, also taste of the sweetness of my God's love, have I so often portrayed to you the beauties and hopes

of His teachings. A glad and willing ear you have given me; yes, even promised to soon enter by holy baptism into community with Christ. Soon we Christians shall celebrate Easter, in memory of the Savior's resurrection, and I am moved to have you accompany me on that eve to the good bishop, Dorotheus, that he may regenerate you by the holy waters. You have been thoroughly instructed, the last doubt dispelled. You will then go with me that your happiness be augmented, entirely completed upon the bosom of Him, who loved us so much as to sacrifice himself upon the cross for our sins.

KALISTOS—My dear Nikon, I cannot longer withstand your pleadings of love and the call of your God. I believe in Him, and confess Him as the one, true God. On the eve of Easter you will call to lead me to your good bishop.

NIKON—(Embracing Kalistos) Thanks be to God. Soon shall you be my new brother in Christ. (Reaches his hand) Farewell, until then.

KALISTOS—Oh, no; you shall not leave. You shall be my guest during the nuptial festivities.

NIKON—Let is be so, but also let Christian moderation be our guide during these days.

KALISTOS—Allow me now to conduct you to Julia; she will be glad to see you. (Exit.)

ACT III.—SCENE 1.—Governor's Palace.

NIGER—At last the gala days are over. The funeral festivities in honor of Lucius were immense, and the nuptials of Julia and Kalistos were celebrated with unheard of splendor. Whole Antioch has been swimming in an ocean of joy and pleasure, for it was honoring the daughter of the governor and the son of a king. The turmoil, however, has nearly upset me for I feel so expanded,, somewhat uncomfortable about the waistband and over my eyes. Each hair on my head has a distinct ache. I must have indulged in viewing the quantity and quality of the nuptial banquet. *Plat* tells us that to know ourselves is the greatest wisdom, and Dio-

genus taught us the sufficiency of the absolute necessities. Still we prefer to know others better than ourselves and strive for luxuries as well as the necessities. That's why we are so much animal, so little man. Who comes here so hurriedly?

SERVIUS—(Panting, trembling and confused rushes in.)

NIGER—By the gods, my lord, what is the matter? You are pale, you are ill!

SERVIUS—(Utmost excited) Oh! were I only! Far rather than this news, that crushes me. Lucius is not dead, he lives.

NIGER—Lucius, the savior of the emperor; he, who has so long been regarded as dead; impossible!

SERVIUS—And yet it is so. This official report from Armenia says that Lucius fell in battle, badly wounded, from his horse and was thought to be dead. The Persian king hearing that there was life in the wounded one, had him carried from the field and tenderly nursed. In admiration of his bravery, he desired to keep the convalescent hero at his court. Lucius declined this proffered honor, whereupon the king gave him his liberty and sent him to the emperor, Decius, at Melitene.

NIGER—That sounds wonderful indeed. I, however, do not find anything so horrifying in the fact that Lucius lives. On the contrary, that should leave you indifferent. He certainly will no longer solicit Julia's hand from you.

SERVIUS—Oh, what a fool, what a fool was I! But, who could know this all? Lucius is now the most powerful favorite of the emperor. Were Julia now his wife, she, with Lucius, would be near the throne, and we with—

NIGER—(Interrupting) But, Servius, be not angry with me if I venture to remark that such language means to tempt the gods. Did Julia not contract a most honorable alliance? Is not Kalistos of royal ancestry? Is he not worthy, not good? I believe that Kalistos is of far greater importance than Lucius.

SERVIUS—The governor of Armenia writes me, however, that Lucius is most potent with the emperor.

NIGER—Royal favor is a narrow and treacherous path. He who ascends it, falls deep. I should prefer to stand with Kalistos upon

the solid plane of personal greatness, of independent self-possession.

SERVIUS—Lucius can annihilate me, and he will do it. I dismissed his suit twice; the second time in an especial insulting manner. I recall his look when he left. He will avenge himself. One word spoken to the emperor will deprive me of the governorship, of my possessions, of home, of honor, and of life.

NIGER—That is true, there danger lies. But who knows, if in his good fortune and fame he yet remembers you or Julia.

SERVIUS—I forgot to tell you that Lucius is on his way to Antioch to be present at the sacrifices in honor of the victory and the preservation of the emperor.

NIGER—If Lucius comes to Antioch, he must have some definite reasons therefore. What are they? That is difficult—is impossible to solve. Let us abide the time. The past is past, and the future is known only to the gods. Who worries himself about the past and fears all which may happen in the future, has not an enjoyable moment. Let us wait and meanwhile you obtain all possible information. (Slowly arising.) I must leave you now to visit my pupil Cajus. (Exit.)

SERVIUS—(Alone in deep thought, startles when addressed by Lucullus.)

LUCULLUS—My lord, a gentleman desires admittance.

SERVIUS—Show him in.

LUCIUS—I greet thee, noble sir!

SERVIUS—(Mustering him for a time, then blurts out) Lucius!

LUCIUS—Yes, it is Lucius. I readily understand that you did not recognize me in my change of costume.

SERVIUS—I had received information that you were with the emperor, Decius, at Melitene—

LUCIUS—I am supposed to be there now. I am only here on your account, for you and perhaps for—Julia—

SERVIUS—(Tries to speak.)

LUCIUS—Let us be brief and frank with each other. I plead for the hand of Julia, your daughter. You dismissed me. You were right when you said I was a poor knight without a name, without

fame, without wealth and therefore was unworthy of Julia. You also thought I was only dreaming and lacked the courage of looking death squarely in the face. Death eluded me and fortune smiled upon me. For the third time, I now renew my prayer, my petition. I have remained the same person, but perhaps shall meet with more favor and success since I have shown that I did not fear death, and since the graciousness of the emperor has distinguished me. How do you now decide?

SERVIUS—(In a politico-trickery manner) Since the name of Lucius is the most noted after the emperor's, which the Roman tongue speaks, he stands too exalted for the daughter of Servius. He has earned far greater reward.

LUCIUS—Did the emperor offer me the hand of his daughter, I would refuse it and the emperor's favor to win Julia. I must know something positive; therefore I could remain no longer in Melitene. Be brief, for to-day I must go back there, to return here again to be present at the sacrifices.

SERVIUS—(Uneasy, finally blurts out) Julia is already married—these two months.

LUCIUS—(Thunderstruck, to himself) Is already married—these two months. (To Servius) To whom?

SERVIUS—To Kalistos.

LUCIUS—To Kalistos! Not a bad choice. Now I have nothing more to do here. (Bows exit.)

SERVIUS—(Alone) Woe be to me and mine. Nothing will now stop the revenge of the emperor's favorite. (Curtain.)

ACT III.—SCENE 2.—Home of Kalistos.

(Julia seated, reading; Kalistos leaning over back of chair.)

NIKON—The blessings of God upon you. I have come to ask you, Kalistos, for a walk this beautiful morning.

JULIA—(Arising) I cannot permit you, my dear husband, to leave the house to-day.

KALISTOS—May I ask you, my beloved, the reason for your decision and fears?

JULIA—I had an evil dream last night that portends the worst. (Nikon smiling—tries to leave them alone together.) (Julia quickly) Leave us not, friend Nikon; hear also my dream, for I know you, too, will participate in my fears.

KALISTOS—Well, Julia, relate what an evil dream you had.

JULIA—I beheld Lucius in robes of purple. He looked at me seriously and intently, with penetrating eyes. He asked me where is your husband? Where is Kalistos? At this moment the executioners dragged you, Kalistos, forth. One of them drew his sword and all was over with you. My father sat upon the tribunal of justice, turned aside his head and wept. Then the executioners came toward me—but fright here shook off the dream. I awoke and saw nothing more. (Shuddering.) Uh! it was so cruel, so bloody! Therefore, dear Kalistos, obey me! This is a wink from the gods. Do not go out to-day, for on the following day a dream, there mysteriously weaves itself that, which will end in blood. Is it not so, friend Nikon; you too desire that Kalistos does not leave the house to-day?

NIKON—I place no faith in dreams, my lady, and fear at least nothing from the walk we intend to take; absolutely nothing.

JULIA—I cannot permit it. I pray you, Kalistos; I implore you by the love you bear me; I conjure you by the gods, do not leave the house; you will never return alive to the arms of your loving wife. (Weeps.)

NIKON—(Soothingly) My dear lady, compose yourself. I promise you upon the honor of a Roman knight to guard your husband as the apple of my eye, and place myself in bond for him.

JULIA—Where are you going together?

NIKON—That, for the present, will have to remain a secret. You shall soon know all and be glad. We shall not keep you long awaiting our return. (Exit both.)

JULIA—(Follows them with her eyes for a time) They are gone! Shall I see him again? perhaps only as a mangled corpse. My soul is filled with dark apprehensions; my heart stifled and throbbing with fear. He tempts the gods with impunity! aye, even his eyes sparkled in anticipation of the results of his daring.

What does it all mean? I cannot fathom this action. (Calls Ni-

NIZIA—What can I do for you, dear Julia?

JULIA—I am so disturbed, Nizia. Nikon and Kalistos, in spite of my entreaties, have gone. Where?—is to remain a secret for the present.

NIZIA—Well, what signifies a walk out with Nikon. He is the noblest of men?

JULIA—True, still a horrid dream I had last night should forbid Kalistos to go out to-day.

NIZIA—Bah! what have dreams to do with an ordinary walk? What have they to do with any action of ours?

JULIA—(Astonished) You, too, do not believe in dreams?

NIZIA—Assuredly not. They are simply manifestations of a disordered stomach or other organ of our body. God alone rules the universe and its people.

JULIA—Yet dreams are inspired by the gods.

NIZIA—Only if one chooses to believe so. Julia, the hated Christians are not so far wrong when they teach that dreams, sorcery and the like are the emanations of the evil one, and that the gods are nothing more than images in marble and bronze, without power, life or virtue.

(Nizia) Oh, Nizia, Nizia!

JULIA—How like Kalistos you speak. I do not, however, understand you, and cannot now bother myself with such.

NIZIA—Some day you will understand and be happy in the knowledge.

JULIA—Let us away to the garden, there to await their return. Surely something dreadful is going to happen.

NIZIA—Before going, let me sing you your favorite song. It will dispel your fears. (Sings.) (After the song, Kalistos and Nikon are heard returning.)

JULIA—(Springing up) I hear them returning. Oh, how glad I am! (Nikon and Kalistos enter.)

NIKON—See, my lady, I bring back your husband hale and hearty, changed in nothing by in spirit.

KALISTOS—(Joyously) Yes, Julia, I yet live; live more than ever.

I have been washed and made an heir to the glories of eternity.

JULIA—You speak in enigmas of late and I fail to understand you.
(Page brings note.)

JULIA—(Reading) Nevertheless, at least a part of my horrid dream has been fulfilled. Lucius was here. (Continues reading.)

NIKON—That means he *will* come to the festive sacrifices—

JULIA—No, no; Niger here states he *was* here. He came in the costume of a favorite of the emperor, so that father with difficulty recognized him. For the third time, he said, he came to claim my hand from father. Learning that I was already married he abruptly left. Father now fears his vengeance upon us all.

KALISTOS—Fear not, my bride, all will end well and we shall live in peace and happiness, such as the whole world cannot give or take from us. We will now have to prepare for the festivities in honor of the victory. Many prominent officials of state and army will come to Antioch.

JULIA—Father fears the worst, for he beholds in Lucius his most pronounced enemy, whose sole thought is to crush him.

KALISTOS—Fear not, Lucius has a noble heart. He will not harm a hair on our heads. Now, however, Nikon and I would wish to be alone here. I shall meet you in your room shortly. (Julia and Nizia exit.) (To Nikon) The day set for the opening of the great festal sacrifices is rapidly approaching.

NIKON—We are Christians, Kalistos; we shall remain away from the sacrifices. To take part therein would be idolatry.

KALISTOS—That I should say. But will our absence be permitted?

NIKON—Commanded even, my friend.

KALISTOS—Is it, however, not an act of cowardice to absent ourselves; not something akin to apostasy from the faith?

NIKON—How do you mean that, Kalistos?

KALISTOS—I mean we must go and acknowledge Christ before the assembled multitude; before the governor and before Lucius, the favorite of the emperor. I shall do it.

NIKON—It will be your death.

KALISTOS—I know it, Nikon; death for Christ.

NIKON—Christ does not demand that one must deliver himself over to the executioner.

KALISTOS—The more voluntary the offering is, the more meritorious. Have you not yourself, my teacher and guide to Christianity, impressed such action upon my heart?

NIKON—Live Kalistos. Spare your life! You can do a great deal to protect the poor Christians and help to fortify them in their faith.

KALISTOS—The example of my death, if it shall come to that, shall fortify them best of all.

NIKON—Ask yourself Kalistos, is it not foolhardiness to banter the sword of the executioner?

KALISTOS—You know, Nikon, I do not depend so much upon my own strength as upon divine grace.

NIKON—But Julia and Servius will be—

KALISTOS—“He, who loves father and mother, brother or sister more than Me is unworthy of Me,” are the words of Christ. Do you remember, Nikon, how often you repeated these words to me during your instructions before baptism? My dear friend, come with me to the sacrifices. We will tell the people that Christ is more than all worldly expectations, all honors, all glories, all wealth; more than life itself.

NIKON—My dear Kalistos, the full power of baptismal grace, weakened by no unfaithful act, works vigorously in you. Alas! I have abused the same grace by many a sin, but my love for Christ is again enkindled at the warmth of your courage. Together we shall go to the sacrifices; together we shall testify for Christ, like so many before us have done, with our confession of faith; yea, with our blood, if need be.

KALISTOS—(Shaking hands) Resolved be it then, Nikon, we remain brothers in Christ living and dying. (Curtain.)

ACT IV.—SCENE 1.—Ampitheatre. ♫

(Mob comes rushing in; boisterous; push each other in seats and cheer when notables appear; bugle blasts; three priests enter and

nobles; Nikon and soldiers, and paphagonian soldiers; bugle blasts; Kalistos, Lucius, Servius.)

SERVIUS—We have assembled here to acknowledge our gratitude to the gods for the glorious victory of our arms over the Persians, and for the deliverance of our noble and virtuous emperor, Decius, from grave peril. Ever mindful of the valor of our brave soldiers, let us not forget the deities, who weave mysteriously the destinies of the empire. Let the sacrifices proceed.

HIGH PRIEST—(Pouring incense on coals) As a pure odor of sacrifice may this incense arise to the praise of Jupiter and all the deities; to the glory of the divine Decius; in honor of the divine Roma as an acknowledgment of our thanks and of our devotion. (Two other priests offer. High priest hands spoon to Lucius, Servius in turn, who offer. Then to Nikon, who declines and ascends the altar steps.)

NIKON—No one can be happier than I on this day, dedicated to the glorification of a grand victory (applause), to the happy deliverance of our emperor from death (applause), to heroic valor. No one can be more grateful to God than I (loud applause). But I know only one God, the almighty creator of heaven and earth. (Mob moves.) I am a Christian, a Christian and therefore—

MOB—(Rising) To the cross with him; to death; to the lions; to the wild beasts!

SERVIUS—(Angrily) Do you adhere to your words?

NIKON—(Calm and firm) I am a Christian and remain a Christian.

MOB—(Tumultuously) To the lions with him! (Repeatedly.)

SERVIUS—(To Nikon's soldiers) Conduct him to prison! (They do no move.) (To paphogonians) You attend to him!

KALISTOS—(Rushes through, embraces Nikon and gives hand in farewell. Priests shocked.)

SERVIUS—(Restoring order by wave of hand) Let not this vile dog disturb our festivities. In accordance with the imperial decree lately issued, I shall proceed against this rebel with unsparing severity. Let the sacrifice proceed.

(High priest cautiously advances to Kalistos, hands him spoon,

but Kalistos in declining strikes it, scattering incense, and steps to altar.)

KALISTOS—I am a Christian like my friend Nikon. (Mob moves; some rise; all murmur and stare at Servius.)

SERVIUS—Guards, remove him. (Drops back in his seat, and whilst nobles offer slips out.) (After nobles have done, priests hold up hands and say)

PRIESTS—Ye gods, accept this our sacrifice, and continue to smile upon us evermore. (Curtain.)

ACT IV.—SCENE 2.—Julia's Room.

JULIA—(To Nizia) Your description of the scene fills me with horror. Oh! my surmises! my dream! it is being fulfilled. Now I understand their secret doings. Nikon has enticed Kalistos from me! And he—became a Christian?—impossible!

NIZIA—The goodness of your heart, Julia, does not permit you to hate anyone, not even the Christians, I am sure.

JULIA—No, I only pity them, these poor deluded people. Their faith may be good enough for the poor, ignorant, the rabble, but how it is possible that people of rank, wealth and refinement, like my husband and Nikon, can fall so low as to mix with such people is beyond my comprehension. Nikon has played the traitor, has deceived us all and dragged down to perdition my own dear Kalistos.

NIZIA—Be not so harsh, Julia. When once your eyes shall have been opened to the true state of affairs, all will have been done for the best. My trust lies with the Almighty.

SERVIUS—Enters abruptly and angrily) What is this. You both also plotting against the gods, the emperor and against me?

JULIA—Oh! father! How can you speak thus to me? Where is my husband? Where is Kalistos? I *must* see him. (Nizia slips quietly away during this.)

SERVIUS—The ingrate sits in confinement. You cannot see him; you shall not see him until the sentence upon his betrayer, Nikon, shall have been executed.

JULIA—What will be done to Nikon?

SERVIUS—He shall die; die by the hands of the executioner, and that, too, this very day. Upon him I shall pour out vengeance, and thus remove from Lucius any chance to blacken my reputation at the emperor's court.

JULIA—And Kalistos?

SERVIUS—Do not mention that ungrateful fellow to me! Nikon, the betrayer, shall have first died, then only the question arises what shall be done with Kalistos. He shall, however, witness the execution of his friend, which will bring him back to his senses.

JULIA—But—

SERVIUS—Don't interrupt me, or contradict me. I demand that I be obeyed. After the execution of Nikon you shall visit your husband. Your entreaties and tears, added to the impressions received at Nikon's execution, will bring him about. You may now go. (Exit.) (Alone) A damnable incident is this! These chaps shall know that I am governor, and will not have my plans crossed. And that Lucius, full of the bitterest sentiments of revenge, will move ever lever to ruin me. To postpone the execution of Nikon only one day would give him ample pretext to sue me at the emperor's, that I did not respect the imperial decrees against the Christians. Besides this, the immediate bloody vengeance against that traitor, Nikon, will surely induce Kalistos to a renunciation of his foolish ideas. If not, then he, too, shall feel my power: yea, all who dare resist me, and were they the last members of my own household. (Curtain.)

ACT V.—SCENE 1.—The Prison.

KALISTOS—Ah! what happiness is mine! Soon I shall tread the path that led my dear Nikon to the haven of joy, of eternal rest in Christ. What are the greatest joys of this earth when compared to those of eternity? What is honor but a fleeting shadow; what is wealth but filth to satisfy passion; what is beauty but a film to hide the ashes of the tomb. Give me rather freedom of the spirit to soar to endless honors, wealth and beauty in the realms

of peace and everlasting joys. Alas! only too long have I served the world and knew not its author. Now, having learned Him, my resolve is fixed. (Sings.)

JULIA—Cruel man, who so coldblooded; yes, even smilingly, causes my father such acute pain, and casts me, your wife, heedlessly and without feeling into abject misery.

KALISTOS—Oh! Julia, could you only look into my soul, you would know that I love you; love you above everything in the world. That I love you above all except my God, my Christ, my Savior only. He, who out of compassion for us poor mortals, came down from heaven to rescue us from eternal death and to open for us the eternal portals of bliss and joy. Hear Julia, if a thousand lives were mine, each one would cheerfully be offered to bring me to Him; there to intercede for you, that we may live with Him in endless love and happiness.

JULIA—Listen Kalistos, remain a Christian; follow your convictions. Only as long as Lucius is here in Antioch pretend as if you regretted having become a Christian. Then my father can, then will he be able to spare you, for he fears Lucius above all.

KALISTOS—Never, never in all eternity shall I, with God's grace, permit myself to even feign having become unfaithful to Christ. In the eyes of the world that would be hypocrisy, deception and the worst example; in the eyes of God, a sin, a mortal sin. No, my beloved, let us walk the straight way, let come what will. It is true, my heart bleeds at the thought of leaving you behind to the cold mercies of a wicked world, but God will protect you and take you unto Himself. That your father's fears regarding Lucius may be proven groundless, have Lucius summoned and return yourself. (Exit Julia.) (Alone) What pain does the parting from love for love entail. Still, has He not said we must leave all for Him to be worthy of Him? And Lucius? Servius has naught to fear from that upright nature, a man void of selfishness and trivial desires for revenge. He loved Julia ardently and honestly, and cannot, yea will not, desire to cause her pain by crushing her father.

LUCIUS—(Eyeing Kalistos intently) You have had me called; what is your pleasure?

KALISTOS—(Frankly) You know, Lucius, what brought me here. Like my friend, Nikon, I shall die I know, or rather I feel it. I die gladly for my faith. One thing, however, pains me. I leave Julia behind, who was entrusted to me only a short time ago. I do not know how she will fare after my death. You once loved Julia and she loved you. When I am no more, join your hands in the bonds of love and matrimony.

LUCIUS—(Thoughtfully) You shall not die, but live. Live, Kalistos and be happy with Julia.

KALISTOS—I shall not live unless I deny my faith. Rather die tenfold than to have to reproach myself for a moment with unfaithfulness toward Christ.

LUCIUS—Such you Christians are, I know it. (Dropping into silent thought) And if I wished, would Julia also wish?

KALISTOS—I believe so.

LUCIUS—And what would Servius, her father, have to say to it? No, no, he dismissed me twice, thrice; dismissed me in disgrace.

KALISTOS—But the circumstances are entirely different now. Let us speak frankly. Servius is ambitious and stubborn. He prides himself upon his old Romanism. Formerly he did not esteem you as you deserved. You now are great and honored before the whole world. Servius will consider it the greatest honor if you—

JULIA—(Hastens to Kalistos, greets Lucius with bow; weeps upon her husband's shoulders.)

KALISTOS—Weep not, Julia; do not depress my heart in these last moments, for behold, I am calm, joyful and happy. I enter eternal life, you remain in this cold, evil world. Here is one, who loves you and can make you happy. Live with Lucius.

JULIA—(Looks surprised at Kalistos.)

KALISTOS—When I shall have died, give Lucius your hand.

JULIA—(Dignified, eyes fixed on Kalistos) I loved Lucius; he knows it. I loved him with the whole intensity of my soul, but this entire, full love I gave to you Kalistos. Am I now unworthy of you? If you die, you will die on account of this Lucius, because

my father fears him. Yes, Lucius, you are the cause, of course, the innocent cause of Kalistos' death. It is unavoidably so, and therefore I declare before you, Kalistos, and before you, Lucius, that I shall also die rather than give my hand and love to a man, who in any manner whatever, even innocently, has become the cause of my husband's death. Behold, Lucius, I will love you, love you as when a child I loved you as my brother. I cannot and never will, however, offer you my hand to a union of hearts. You are noble and magnanimous to endorse my resolve. Be more noble, more magnanimous and save (on knees), save this unfortunate one, my poor Kalistos. I say it and it is true, if my father condemns him to die, he does it out of fear of you. You might become his accuser and crush him. Be great enough to save your rival.

KALISTOS—(Smilingly raises Julia.)

LUCIUS—Go, sweet sister Julia, and tell your father he has absolutely nothing to fear from me. Tell him he must pardon Kalistos. Tell him I beseech him to do it. (Giving each his hand) Farewell, farewell, Kalistos and Julia, be happy. (Exit.)

JULIA—(Falling jubilant on neck of Kalistos) Saved, saved! I go to get certainty from my father. I shall soon return to bring you the happy tidings of release. (Exit.)

ACT V.—SCENE 2.—Governor's Room.

SERVIUS—(In ugly mood) I must sacrifice him. I must crush him or be crushed myself. Don't you think so?

NIGER—I don't understand whom you must crush.

SERVIUS—Kalistos, my son-in-law. Do not interrupt me. Let me speak out, then judge! If I do not execute the imperial decrees against the Christians upon Kalistos, Lucius will report me to the emperor, and I am lost. I will be deprived of office and honor, of wealth and possessions, if not of life itself. Lucius lies in wait for my ruin. I would do the same myself.

NIGER—It is said, Lucius has higher and nobler thoughts.

SERVIUS—I told you I wanted to speak out, then you may venture

your opinion. Lucius is watching for a weakness, an opening on my part to ruin me. If I execute the imperial decrees even upon Kalistos, as is my duty, I shall rise in the esteem and favor of the emperor. Now speak.

NIGER—You permit me, sir, free speech and I avail myself of the permit. You have, sir, no proof whatever that Lucius^a has any such low thoughts.

SERVIUS—To ruin an enemy, an opponent is no law way of thinking. I do as he would do. Have you nothing else to offer?

NIGER—You promise yourself, sir, a growth in the estimation of the emperor by the execution of Kalistos. I would not wish to advance by steps, which are dyed crimson with the blood of a son-in-law and damped with the tears of an only child. No, indeed, Servius.

SERVIUS—You are right; it comes home to me, but—a true Roman never judges according to impulses and sentiments of the heart, rather according to cool intelligence and it tells me, *you must*. Law is supreme. Do I not act in conformity with the law? Who can lay blame for the act at my door? No, no, I still must sacrifice this Kalistos. You may go. (Exit Niger.) (Servius walks the floor.)

JULIA—Father, I have been to the prison. I saw Kalistos, who persists in adhering to his declaration of faith.

SERVIUS—Then let the dog die! (Julia shudders.)

JULIA—Lucius was also there—

SERVIUS—How well it would now be were Lucius your husband. Why did you accept this Kalistos?

JULIA—(Quietly) You took Lucius away from me and gave me Kalistos.

SERVIUS—Had you been more stubborn. You had to live with your husband, not I—

JULIA—(Softly) Father, I would not have advised myself to be stubborn. You told me often that, according to old Roman usage, the father selected a husband for his daughter, not she for herself. But to return to my words. Lucius desires me to tell you that you need have no fear for him, absolutely none. He also be-

seches you to liberate my husband. Permit me now, dear father, to bring him here that he may thank you for his life.

SERVIUS—Foolish one! You are only a woman and you poorly understand the language of politics and of the passions.

JULIA—You still mistrust Lucius?

SERVIUS—That I do, more than ever.

JULIA—You wrong his noble, high-minded soul. It does not know how to deceive or to lie.

SERVIUS—I ought to know that better than you.

JULIA—But Lucius asks you to pardon Kalistos.

SERVIUS—Yes, to set a trap for me in order to more easily accomplish my ruin.

JULIA—How often have your surmises not deceived you?

SERVIUS—Far oftener have they saved me.

JULIA—(Kneeling) I conjure you, confide in Lucius just this once.

SERVIUS—I shall not do it. Did he himself remain silent, there are a thousand tongues in his service to betray me.

JULIA—(Arising, horrified) Now I understand you. Kalistos falls a victim to heartless politics.

SERVIUS—You do not know the emperor. His orders are imperative. I must obey. I have studied it well. One of us both—Kalistos or myself. One thing, however, Julia, remains for you. When Kalistos is no more, then give your hand to Lucius. Then and only then can he be reconciled to us.

JULIA—Never, forever never.

SERVIUS—I shall command you to do so.

JULIA—I shall not obey. This once I shall be stubborn. You willed I should be.

SERVIUS—I shall disinherit you.

JULIA—Do it; I would rather beg my bread from door to door.

SERVIUS—(Pausing awhile, leaves suddenly.)

JULIA—Father, father; you are going to execute the sentence of death upon Kalistos; oh, father, father (tries door which is locked) the door is locked; help, help, Nizia, Niger; help, help, oh! yea gods, help, Niger, Niger.

NIGER—(Opens from without.)

JULIA—Go, hasten, Niger; seek my father—he must come here—but no—stop—yes, go, go, hasten. (Rushes about and then exit.)

SLIDE SCENE.

(Soldiers passing with Kalistos, Julia meets them, weeping embraces Kalistos.)

KALISTOS—Farewell, Julia, my beloved, I go to Christ, and my first petition to Him shall be that He enlighten you and give you the grace of faith. (Kisses her forehead.) PAX TECUM. (Julia swoons and is dragged away by a soldier.)

ACT V.—SCENE 3.—Governor's Room.

SERVIUS—(Alone) He is dead. My triumph over Lucius is complete. I am now the emperor's friend and shall succeed to greater honors. Bah! what care I for this handful of Christians. They do not bother me and, like Nikon, are admirable soldiers—yet, the emperor and his representative must furnish amusement for the people—the common rabble—and we will give them sufficiency.

LUCIUS—(Angry) Inhuman father; heartless slave of fear and ambition! ruthless man, incapable of faith in nobility of soul! Were you forced to murder Kalistos? Now, right now, the desire overwhelms me to crush you. Base wretch, grovelling after honors through the blood of the innocent; yes, feasting upon the blood of a son-in-law that is diluted with the tears of an only child. This act seals your doom, for ere long you shall be without honors, wealth and home. An ignominious death alone will suffice to blot out the execrable memory of you—

JULIA—(Slowly approaching) Father finish your work by bringing another sacrifice. Kalistos dying promised to procure for me the grace of faith in the one, true living God. The promise has been fulfilled. I am a Christian and shall remain one unto death. Concede me only enough time to receive baptism or baptise me at once in my own blood. Then will my dream have been fully completed and realized.

LUCIUS—No, no! Too much blood has already flown. I saw much of the Christians in Rome and have learned to esteem them. I,

myself, shall exert my whole influence to have this bloody work stopped, and—

MESSENGER—(Rushes in) My lord, I bring you the horrible news that the Roman legions have been entirely routed in their campaign against the Goths. Decius, the emperor, with his usual impetuosity, forged himself to the front of battle and fell by the hands of the king of the Goths. The army is fleeing in consternation. (Exit.)

LUCIUS—Duty calls. I hasten to the scene of action to try to reform the scattered legions, even at the risk of my all.

SERVIUS—He (pointing at Lucius) will now be emperor! All is lost! (Rushes out.) A cup of hemlock alone remains for me.

LUCIUS—Farewell, Julia, my sweet sister! May your God protect you and if He is the only true one, petition Him to pour a ray of His light into my soul, that I too may know Him. (Kisses her forehead.) PAX TECUM. (Hastens out.)

JULIA—(Alone) Is this the end of all? I stand alone—but no, the God of the orphan still lives—that God, my God, whom Kalistos purchased for me with his life's blood. What now are honors, wealth and beauty? Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. My heart can only be satiated by eternal love; my home only in the realms of peace. Farewell, oh! world, with your vanities! I go to the good bishop Dorotheus, of whom Nizia so often spoke to me and with whom she now most probably is, to lay my possessions at his feet. Thus freed from all terrestrial ties, my soul may take its flight to God, there to enjoy with Kalistos, a glory which none of the princes of this world know—for, the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard—neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. (Noises like wind, Julia frightens somewhat, soft music, gets lighter, looks about her.) What strange sounds! what beautiful strains! How brilliant the rays of light! What delightful odor of strange blossoms. Is a messenger come from on high to summon me? Oh, my soul! awake to meet him. My God, my all. (Sings, towards close of song, on one knee. A flood of light is thrown on her, and curtain drops.)

FINIS.

SEP. 10 1903

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 199 459 7

